

62nd SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Statement by

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Sixth Committee

Agenda item # 108

“Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism”

(United Nations, New York, 11 October 2007)

Check Against Delivery

Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time my delegation takes the floor, allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this Committee and the members of the Bureau, and to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation.

Turning to the topic before us. For the most of us, terrorism has a clear self-explanatory meaning based on a common-sense understanding which is hardly questionable or disputed. In essence, it is the deliberate and indiscriminate targeting of non-combatants for the purpose of sowing havoc and fear. Simply put, it is a deliberate rejection of humanitarian distinctions, disregarding the distinction between civilians and soldiers, a kindergarten from a bunker, a tank from an ambulance, an army camp from a place of worship.

While the term terrorism has been the subject of definitional uncertainty and political debate, following a series of decisive UN resolutions as well as reports of the Secretary-General and the Security-Council, it is clear that that terrorism is unjustifiable regardless of cause or grievance. For this reason, we must express some concern that a recent report by one UN special rapporteur on violations of human rights in our region, chose to describe terrorism as a "relative concept" (A/62/275, paragraph 24).

Mr. Chairman,

One of the complexities of terrorism is the duality with which it is often viewed. It is seen both as a battlefield and an enemy, a weapon and a method of warfare, a strategy and a tactic, a means and an end.

Recently this complexity has been compounded as we have seen terrorist groups seeking to take advantage of the democratic process as a means to advance their violent agenda of hate and undermine public order, without abandoning terrorism and violence.

No true democracy on earth, with all its imperfections, allows armed militia, or groups with violent agendas, to participate in elections. But some demonstrate a troubling double standard, insisting on high standards in their own country, but forgetting them when they look abroad. Terrorists who could never run for office at home are treated with appeasement as legitimate politicians when elected elsewhere. As a result, we empower those who use democratic means to advance anti-democratic ends. It is crucial that we maintain clear and universal standards which will prevent terrorist groups from using democracy as a Trojan horse to undermine democracies from within.

As much as terrorism is abhorrent, it is also vulnerable. Like any other practicing business, it cannot operate without a steady flow of funds. It feeds on a vast logistical and financial infrastructure. The Security Council recognized this when it called upon all States to prevent the financing of terrorists and terrorist organizations, including through organizations claiming to have charitable, social or cultural goals, recognizing that terrorist fundraising in charitable guise is a doubly heinous crime – not only is it marketing in death, but in doing so, it cynically abuses those in genuine need of assistance.

Terrorists have a second weakness - they cannot operate in a vacuum. They are dependent on sympathetic States for sponsorship and support. The position of the

international community, as reaffirmed by Security Council resolutions, must be forthright: States cannot allow their territory to be used with impunity, as a base for cross-border terrorist attacks.

In its sixtieth session, the General Assembly adopted by consensus, for the first time, a comprehensive global counter terrorism strategy, reiterating the international community's clear and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism. Like any strategy, the real test for its success lies in its effective implementation and adaptation to the practical on-going challenges on the ground. Israel is looking forward to the follow-up review process of the strategy, with the hope that substantial elements which were suggested in the Secretary-General's report and have unfortunately been omitted from the strategy so far, will be reconsidered, incorporated and implemented in the future so that it retains its relevance and effectiveness.

Understanding the importance of strengthening the state-capacity in combating terrorism, Israel has been working in the past year in an Inter-Ministerial committee, on a comprehensive Anti-Terrorism Bill. The goal of this new legislation is to address the dilemma of struggling against terrorism while safeguarding human rights, including those of suspected terrorists.

In closing, let me emphasize one important truth: whether or not terrorism is that "known element one cannot define", the absence of a consensus definition of what constitutes terrorism, undermines the legitimacy of the UN and state-practice as a whole, in dealing with this threat. As much as we wish to see the comprehensive convention concluded at the earliest opportunity possible, it should not come at the expense of diluting the principles that stand to make it an effective tool in the fight against terrorism.

In the quest for a working definition of international terrorism, there is a need for legal precision, but even more so - for moral clarity, and although international law is not, and cannot possibly be devoid of politics, the moral compass that should guide us, is best exemplified in the words of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, according to which: "there can be no acceptance of those who seek to justify the deliberate taking of innocent civilian life - regardless of cause or grievance. If there is one universal principle that all peoples can agree on, surely it is this".

Thank You.